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Letter dated 20 February 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 17 February 2014 from Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Annex

Thank you very much for your letter dated 14 February 2014 on the situation in the Central African Republic. Your prompt reply to my letter of 13 February 2014 is further testimony to the profound preoccupation of the United Nations family as a whole and your personal commitment to do whatever you can to help strengthen the international response to the dire and complex situation prevailing in the Central African Republic. The words of appreciation for the efforts of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) and recognition of the very positive impact MISCA has already made are a source of encouragement for the African Union. We are determined to persevere in our efforts, in line with the relevant provisions of the African Union Constitutive Act and the underlying principle of non-indifference.

As you rightly pointed out, we have a pressing responsibility to scale up our efforts in order to guarantee the protection of the civilian population and ensure the safe and unhindered provision of humanitarian assistance. No day should be lost in this endeavour. While the international community has not been able to prevent, as it should have, the descent of the Central African Republic into a situation of widespread violence, it is a moral and political imperative to prevent further chaos and suffering for the people of the Central African Republic. I cannot but echo your call regarding the obligation for all of us to act with renewed vigour to stop the gravest threats to the population. It is within this context that, upon the transfer of authority to MISCA, the African Union took immediate steps to enhance the troops on the ground, with the deployment within a month of two additional battalions, thanks to the support of the United States of America, which ensured their airlift.

Given the imperative of expediting the stabilization process in the Central African Republic, averting further killings and creating conditions for the safe return of those communities that were forced to flee, it is critical that we work out a common approach on how best we can effectively address the challenges at hand. In formulating such an approach, we need to be guided by considerations of practicality, in order to ensure that our efforts concretely mitigate the situation on the ground; flexibility, so as to be responsive to the exigencies of the situation; and creativity, to enable the international community to devise, as needed, innovative approaches to maximize the impact of its intervention.

In so doing, we should of necessity build on the ongoing efforts by MISCA with the support of the French Sangaris operation. Recognizing that the main security threat is currently posed by the anti-Balaka militias and their criminal attacks on innocent civilians, MISCA and Sangaris have already started joint operations to neutralize this armed group. These efforts will be intensified over the coming days.

Steps have also been taken to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It is in this context that MISCA has put in place arrangements to secure the vital corridor linking the Central African Republic to Cameroon. Over the past few weeks, MISCA has escorted and protected several humanitarian and other convoys using this route, including trucks belonging to the World Food Programme. Beyond the facilitation of the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the objective is also to ensure the resumption of trade flow, as well as the full control by the Central African Republic authorities of the sources of revenue of their country through the effective collection of the customs duties and related taxes levied on goods destined to the Central African Republic. As you are aware, over the past few months, the

armed groups have set up numerous illegal roadblocks that impede trade and deprive the Central African Republic authorities of the very resources they need to perform the core functions of the State.

I would also like to inform you that MISCA is about to complete its deployment plan in the countryside. While recognizing that the sheer size of the Central African Republic territory and the widespread nature of the violence make the task of the international forces extremely challenging, we strongly believe that no effort should be spared to ensure that those at risk are afforded the basic protection they so desperately need.

In the report due to be submitted by the African Union to the Security Council in accordance with paragraph 32 of resolution 2127 (2013), we will provide more detailed information on the situation on the ground as we assess it, as well as on our efforts, the results achieved so far and the challenges that continue to lie ahead. I hope that our contribution will assist the Council as it considers further steps to deal with the situation in the light of the report of the United Nations assessment mission mandated in paragraph 48 of resolution 2127 (2013).

In terms of the way forward, allow me to start by stressing that I concur with you on the fact that the continued role of MISCA, bolstered by additional African troops and capabilities, such as mobility, is vital to the accomplishment of our shared objectives. More specifically, taking note of your intention to set forth a proposal on how the international community should address the situation and in response to your invitation for ideas on the matter prior to the meeting of the Security Council scheduled to take place on 18 February 2014, I have attached herewith a set of proposals (see enclosure).

I would also like to stress how important it is for the international community, notably the United Nations, to fully support African endeavours driven by a strong regional and continental commitment. On the situation in the Central African Republic, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has demonstrated proactivity and leadership. The African Union has also remained continuously engaged. It is in the interest of all of us to ensure that Africans play the necessary leadership role and assume the responsibilities involved, for without African leadership and ownership, there can be no lasting solutions to the myriad of peace and security challenges that continue to beset our continent.

In conclusion, I take note of your invitation for the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smaïl Chergui, to attend the consultations scheduled to take place ahead of the Security Council meeting of 18 February 2014. Unfortunately, in view of the short notice and prior engagements in the context of the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Sahara region, with meetings scheduled to take place in Niamey from 17 to 19 February 2014, it has not been possible for Ambassador Chergui to be in New York on time. In the light of these developments, I hope the present letter will assist you in your presentation to the Security Council and could be shared with all the members of the Council, including the enclosure.

Permit me also to emphasize the critical relevance of conflict prevention as we address other peace and security challenges on the continent, so that we are not faced with catastrophe situations before we act.

(*Signed*) **Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma**

Enclosure

African Union proposals on the enhancement of international action in the Central African Republic

These proposals are informed by the African Union assessment of the situation on the ground and by the relevant decisions of the African Union Peace and Security Council. They are as follows:

Strengthening of MISCA

The Mission has almost reached its current authorized strength of 6,000 military, police and civilian personnel. However, there is a need for additional police personnel, particularly formed police units, to ensure a better balance in the Mission's uniformed personnel, in order to deal more effectively with issues of law and order, including through close interaction with the civilian population. The African Union is also prepared, as needed, to deploy additional troops to ensure a greater presence on the ground. In the meantime, and bearing in mind the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General regarding the delivery of humanitarian assistance outside Bangui, MISCA will take steps to protect, as necessary, humanitarian convoys destined to the countryside, as the Mission is indeed already doing along the corridor linking the Central African Republic to Cameroon. The Mission will also continue to facilitate the movement of humanitarian convoys in the countryside.

As stated in the Chairperson's letter of 13 February 2014, a number of African countries are ready to provide troops and police personnel. What is needed is logistical and financial support to ensure the deployment of these uniformed personnel and their sustenance, as well as the provision of equipment required in critical areas. It is the hope of the African Union that the international community, driven as it is by a legitimate sense of urgency and a determination to rapidly improve the situation across the country, will be able to urgently provide the immediate support required for the enhancement of MISCA. The African Union will submit a list of the most urgent needs of the Mission.

For the avoidance of any doubt, it is important to reiterate the position of the African Union on the possible introduction of an additional international force in the form of a "coalition of the willing", as contained in the Chairperson's letter of 13 February 2014. The African Union believes that such an initiative will not be helpful.

Expeditious deployment of the European Union operation in the Central African Republic as authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 2134 (2014)

This will ease the pressure on the international forces currently on the ground, allowing them to enhance the effectiveness of their ongoing efforts and focus as appropriate on other pressing tasks. The African Union would like to reiterate its call for the European Union to use the opportunity of this operation to provide targeted support to MISCA in a number of areas, as per the consultations the Commission and the European Union had in the lead-up to the adoption of resolution 2134 (2014).

Streamlining command and control

The African Union takes note of the observations made regarding the issue of command and control. Efforts are being expedited to strengthen the command and control structure of MISCA, notably through the proper staffing of its Mission and Force headquarters. At the same time, there is a need to enhance coordination among the different international forces operating on the ground, bearing in mind that both the Sangaris and the European Union operations are mandated to support MISCA. The African Union is ready to host a meeting in Bangui to work out the details of the coordination mechanisms that are required.

Mobilization of more predictable and sustainable support for MISCA

The African Union would like to express its utmost appreciation for the Secretary-General's intention to advocate for a support package for MISCA troops that would include direct logistic support, as well as reimbursement for heavy equipment, funded from the United Nations assessed contributions. In order to move forward, it is proposed that the African Union Peace and Security Department and the relevant United Nations Secretariat Departments, in close consultation with the ECCAS secretariat and other stakeholders, urgently and jointly start working on a strategic concept that would articulate a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing the crisis in the Central African Republic. Such a concept will build on the lessons learned from the elaboration, in October 2012, by the African Union in coordination with the United Nations and other partners, of a strategic concept for the resolution of the Malian crisis, which was aimed at facilitating a coordinated approach to the situation then obtaining in the country, as well as the provision of more predictable United Nations support.

The proposed support package should be predicated on the fact that MISCA will transition to a United Nations operation in due course, once the required conditions on the ground have been created. The African Union has consistently made it clear that the role of MISCA is to facilitate a broader and more sustainable international engagement in the Central African Republic by successfully undertaking the initial stabilization phase of the situation. It is our hope that, within the next six to nine months, this process will be completed, laying the ground for the next phase in our joint efforts, in which the peacekeeping function will be performed by the United Nations. The precise time frame will be determined based on regular joint African Union-United Nations assessments of the situation and benchmarking exercises against clearly identified indicators.

The African Union would like to seize this opportunity to stress that as part of the broader international engagement alluded to above, the role of the region and the African Union should be clearly recognized and supported, so that the United Nations peacekeeping and other related efforts can be anchored on a strong regional and continental involvement, building on the respective comparative advantages of all the international actors concerned. It is also critical that in the envisaged transition process, we learn from the Mali experience. The African Union will elaborate further on these issues while they are being dealt with by the Security Council in the context of the report of the United Nations assessment mission referred to in the letter.

Payment of salaries and re-establishment of basic State functions

As part of the immediate steps required to stabilize the situation, the international community should pay due attention to the payment of salary arrears due to civil servants and the pension for retirees. Indeed, the deepening economic crisis arising from the conflict in the Central African Republic has torn apart the social fabric of the country and created conditions conducive to criminal acts such as looting. We are absolutely convinced that addressing this issue, and doing so urgently, will significantly contribute to the consolidation of the security gains made by MISCA and the Sangaris operation. Equally important is the need for the State to be in a position to exercise its most basic functions. Over the past few weeks, one of the most frustrating experiences of MISCA has been the total collapse of the criminal justice system. Indeed, many of those apprehended because of their involvement in criminal activities, such as looting and attacks against civilians, could not be kept in custody, much less prosecuted, in the absence of the required judicial structures. The resources needed to address these two issues are modest compared with those required for the deployment of international forces.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as repatriation, in the case of foreign fighters

The immediate start of this programme will spur and enhance the process of disarming the rest of the ex-Séléka groups.

Review of the political process

There will be no sustainable military and security gains if they are not accompanied by an inclusive political process geared towards reconciliation and the early restoration of constitutional order through the holding of free, fair and transparent elections. From the African Union perspective, the role of the international community should be to extend firm support to ECCAS, through its Chair, President Idriss Deby Itno, and the Chair of the ECCAS Follow-up Committee on the Central African Republic, President Denis Sassou Nguesso. They have demonstrated exemplary leadership and commitment, as illustrated by the ECCAS Extraordinary Summit held in N'Djamena on 9 and 10 January 2014. Of particular importance is the reconciliation conference provided for in the communiqué of the Summit. United Nations support in this respect will be critical.

It is proposed to take advantage of the next meeting of the International Contact Group on the Central African Republic, scheduled to take place in Brazzaville, to give a new impetus to the international support to the political process in the Central African Republic. The African Union intends to initiate immediately consultations with all concerned for the early convening of this meeting.

The African Union would also like to highlight two additional issues that are critical to its ongoing efforts to stem violence and facilitate the early stabilization of the situation, as they will act as a deterrent to further acts of violence and attempts to undermine the search for lasting peace and reconciliation in the country. These relate to:

(1) The work of the International Commission of Inquiry put in place on 22 January 2014 in order to immediately investigate reports of violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and abuses of human

rights in the Central African Republic by all parties since 1 January 2013: As requested by the Peace and Security Council communiqué of 29 January 2014, MISCA has been directed to extend full cooperation to the Commission and to make available to it any relevant information in its possession. We encourage the Commission to carry out its work with the required sense of urgency;

(2) The issue of sanctions against individuals and entities as spelled out in the relevant provisions of resolution 2134 (2014): It is of utmost importance and urgency that these sanctions be put into effect. We look forward to the early designation of the individuals and entities concerned. The African Union is reviewing its list of individuals targeted by sanctions, particularly with a view to including in it individuals linked to the anti-Balaka group. Close coordination between the African Union and the United Nations is paramount in this respect. In the meantime, MISCA has been directed to lend full support and cooperation to the Security Council Committee and Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013).